

Message Text

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ORIGIN NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-12 IO-14 ISO-00 SSM-05 H-02
INR-07 INRE-00 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-02 PM-05 PRS-01
SP-02 SS-15 SSO-00 ACDA-12 OMB-01 TRSE-00 ARA-14
EA-12 HA-05 SIG-02 MMO-04 /139 R

DRAFTED BY NEA/PWBHARRIS:DP
APPROVED BY NEA/P:REUNDELAND
S/PRS - MR. CARTER (INFO)
H - MR. FLATEN (INFO)
SSM - MR. MC ANDREW
NEA - MR. NEUMANN
NEA/IAI - MR. SMITH
NEA/ARN - MR. DRAPER
NEA/EGY - MR. NEWBERRY
NEA/ARP - MR. TWINAM

-----026285 290019Z /70

O R 282253Z DEC 77
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY BERLIN IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY MANAMA
AMEMBASSY RABAT
AMEMBASSY SANA
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
AMEMBASSY TUNIS
USMISSION SINAI
AMCONSUL DHAHRAN
USMISSION GENEVA
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AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
USMISSION USNATO
AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY DOHA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
USCINCEUR
DOD
JCS
CIA
USIA
NSC

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CINCEUR FOR POLAD; TEL AVIV FOR PAO, DELIVER BY 9 A.M.

E.O. 11652:N/A

TAGS: PFOR

SUBJECT: DEPARTMENT PRESS BRIEFING - DECEMBER 28, 1977

1. FOR YOUR INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE FOLLOWING ARE EXCERPTS
FROM DEPARTMENT PRESS BRIEFING FOR DECEMBER 28. FYI ONLY,
OFFICER PRESENT TODAY WAS TOM RESTON.
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Q. DO YOU HAVE ANY COMMENTS ON BEGIN DIVULGING THE WHOLE
PLAN TO HIS CABINET?

A. NO.

Q. IS THERE ANYTHING ON THE SECRETARY'S PLANS AS FAR AS
THE JERUSALEM CONFERENCE GOES?

A. NO, I HAVE NOTHING FURTHER ON THAT. I REALLY AM JUST
ABOUT WHERE I WAS YESTERDAY.

Q. SO IN OTHER WORDS, HE IS GOING ON THE PRESIDENT'S TRIP
TOMORROW, AND HE COMES BACK ABOUT THE 7TH?

A. THAT IS THE PRESENT PLAN, YES.

Q. CAN YOU CONFIRM JUST WHEN IS THE JERUSALEM CONFERENCE

OPENING UP -- TO WHICH, I GATHER, THE SECRETARY HAS BEEN
INVITED.

A. I AM NOT EXACTLY SURE WHEN IT IS DUE TO BEGIN, AS A

MATTER OF FACT. I THINK IT'S IN MID-JANUARY SOMETIME. I THINK I HAVE SEEN REPORTS THAT THEY ARE TALKING ABOUT JANUARY 15 -- BUT THEN I HAVE SEEN OTHER REPORTS SAYING JANUARY 12 -- AND I AM NOT SURE IT HAS BEEN FORMALLY SET YET NOR AM I SURE THAT THERE HAS BEEN A FORMAL INVITATION TO THE SECRETARY TO ATTEND THAT MEETING.

Q. BUT WHAT IS HIS GENERAL ATTITUDE, AT THIS POINT, TO ATTENDING SUCH A MEETING?

A. AS I SAID YESTERDAY, TWO OR THREE WEEKS AGO THE SECRETARY SAID THAT IF HE DID RECEIVE AN INVITATION, THAT HE WOULD PROBABLY GO. NOW EXACTLY WHEN HE WOULD GO AND HOW LONG HE WOULD GO FOR, WE DON'T KNOW -- BUT THE SECRETARY
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WISHES TO DO ANYTHING WHICH IS SUPPORTIVE AND USEFUL TO AID THIS PROCESS OF NEGOTIATION. BUT THERE ARE NO FORMAL PLANS AT THIS POINT.

Q. TOM, WHAT DO YOU MEAN, "THERE IS NO FORMAL INVITATION?"

A. I SAID THERE WAS NO FORMAL INVITATION THAT I KNOW OF.

Q. DO YOU MEAN A WRITTEN PIECE OF PAPER?

A. I AM NOT SURE WHAT THE DIPLOMATIC FORMALITIES OF ISSUING INVITATIONS ARE.

Q. WELL, THE PRESIDENT SAID THAT PRIME MINISTER BEGIN HAS ASKED HIM TO SEND SECRETARY VANCE, ON THE PHONE THE OTHER DAY. IS THIS NOT FORMAL ENOUGH?

A. I DON'T WANT TO GET INTO THE BUSINESS OF WHAT IS "FORMAL ENOUGH." I AM JUST SWIMMING IN WATERS THAT I REALLY AM NOT FULLY EQUIPPED TO SWIM IN, AS TO WHAT DIPLOMATIC FORMALITIES ARE, HERE. BUT GOING TO THE SUBSTANCE OF WHETHER WE HAVE FORMAL OR PRECISE PLANS FOR THE SECRETARY TO GO TO JERUSALEM WE DO NOT AT THIS TIME HAVE THEM.

Q. CAN YOU CHECK AND FIND OUT WHAT IT WOULD NEED FOR THE PRESIDENT -- FOR THE SECRETARY TO HAVE AN ORDER TO GO, IF HE WANTS TO GO?

A. YES, I WILL, BUT I THINK THIS IS A SIDE ISSUE. OUR POSITION REMAINS AS I STATED IT YESTERDAY THAT THE

SECRETARY SAID THAT IF HE GETS AN INVITATION, HE WILL PROBABLY GO; AND HE STANDS READY TO DO ANYTHING WHICH IS
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USEFUL.

Q. HAS AN INVITATION BEEN ISSUED BY THE U.S. GOVERNMENT TO PRESIDENT ASSAD, TO HAVE A MEETING SOMEWHERE IN EUROPE (OR SOMEWHERE ELSE FOR THAT MATTER) WITH PRESIDENT CARTER?

A. WELL, THE PRESIDENT SAID, IN PLAINS, BEFORE COMING BACK TO WASHINGTON, THAT IT WOULD SUIT HIM FINE IF HE AND PRESIDENT ASAD COULD GET TOGETHER, IF THE DETAILS COULD BE WORKED OUT. WE ARE SURE THAT THE SYRIANS ARE AWARE OF PRESIDENT CARTER'S VIEWS, AND WE HAVE BEEN IN TOUCH WITH THEM CONSTANTLY.

Q. I AM JUST WONDERING WHETHER A FORMAL INVITATION HAS BEEN ISSUED TO PRESIDENT ASSAD, BY THE U.S. GOVERNMENT.

A. I AM SORRY, I AM NOT AUTHORIZED TO GO BEYOND WHAT I HAVE JUST SAID.

Q. HAVE YOU HEARD ANYTHING FROM THE SYRIAN GOVERNMENT ON WHETHER PRESIDENT ASSAD WILL BE MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT OF SAUDI ARABIA, THEN?

A. I DON'T KNOW -- I DON'T KNOW WHAT THE SYRIAN GOVERNMENT HAS TOLD US IN RECENT DAYS.

Q. PRIME MINISTER BEGIN SAID TODAY THAT PRESIDENT CARTER HAD GIVEN A POSITIVE APPRECIATION OF THE PLAN THAT HE LAID OUT TODAY IN PARLIAMENT. CAN YOU GIVE US ANY ENLIGHTENMENT ON EXACTLY WHAT "A POSITIVE APPRECIATION" AMOUNTS TO AND WHAT YOU DO THINK OF THE BEGIN PLAN NOW THAT IT HAS BEEN PUBLISHED?

A. WHAT I CAN DO IS ONLY TO REFER YOU TO THE STATEMENT WHICH SECRETARY VANCE MADE ON DECEMBER 17TH AFTER THE MEETINGS BETWEEN PRESIDENT CARTER AND MR. VANCE AND PRIME
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MINISTER BEGIN, AND THAT REMAINS OUR VIEW OF WHAT MR. BEGIN WAS DISCUSSING WITH THE PRESIDENT.

Q. IT WOULD FOLLOW FROM THAT ANSWER THAT THE PLAN THAT THE PRIME MINISTER OUTLINED IN THE KNESSET TODAY IS IDENTICAL WITH THE PLAN HE WAS TALKING ABOUT TO PRESIDENT CARTER TEN DAYS AGO. IT IS MY UNDERSTANDING THAT THERE ARE SIGNIFI-

CANT DIFFERENCES. DO YOU MEAN TO SAY THAT IT IS THE SAME PLAN ?

A. WHAT I SHOULD DO, I THINK, IS TO GO BACK AND ASK, "DO WE HAVE AMORE PRECISE APPRAISAL OF WHAT THE PRIME MINISTER WAS OUTLINING TO THE KNESSET TODAY?" GENERALLY, I DOUBT WHETHER I WILL BE ABLE TO PRODUCE FOR YOU A PRECISE APPRAISAL OF WHAT PARTS OF IT WE MAY APPROVE OR DISAPPROVE, IF INDIEED WE DO APPROVE OR DISAPPROVE OF ANY PARTS OF TT.

Q. SINCE BOTH MIDDLE EASTERN LEADERS HAVE OUTLINED BEGIN'S PROPOSAL, COULD YOU TELL US WHAT WERE THE EXACT AMERICAN SUGGESTIONS ON HOW TO SOLVE THE MIDDLE EAST PROBLEM?

A. NO.

2. THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION WAS POSTED IN THE DEPARTMENT PRESS OFFICE IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION TAKEN AT THE DECEMBER 27TH PRESS BRIEFING:

Q. WHAT ARE ATHERTON'S PLANS?

A. ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR NEAR EASTERN AND SOUTH ASIAN AFFAIRS, ALFRED L. ATHERTON, WILL BE ACCOMPANYING THE PRESIDENT ON HIS VISITS TO IRAN, AND SAUDI ARABIA DURING A PERIOD WHEN THE CAIRO CONFERENCE IS IN RECESS. AT THIS UNCLASSIFIED

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POINT, WE HAVE NOTHING FURTHER FOR YOU ON HIS PLANS.

Q. WILL PRESIDENT CARTER MEET WITH PRESIDENT ASSAD, KING HUSSEIN AND PRESIDENT SADAT IN RIYADH, AS THE BBC HAS REPORTED?

A. PRESIDENT CARTER HAS NO PLANS FOR SUCH A MEETING. AS YOU KNOW, PRESIDENT CARTER WILL BE MEETING WITH KING HUSSEIN DURING THE PRESIDENT'S VISIT TO TEHERAN.

Q. WHAT PALESTINIAN LEADERS HAVE WE BEEN IN TOUCH WITH RECENTLY AND WHOM DO THEY REPRESENT?

A. OUR DISCUSSIONS ABOUT EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE A COMPREHENSIVE MIDDLE EAST PEACE SETTLEMENT HAVE BEEN AND ARE WITH CONCERNED GOVERNMENTS.

IN THE COURSE OF OUR DIPLOMATIC CONTACTS WE MAY HAVE HAD DISCUSSIONS WITH PALESTINIANS, WHO, AS YOU KNOW, ARE RESIDENTS IN MANY PARTS OF THE ARAB WORLD. AS WE HAVE MADE CLEAR MANY TIMES, WE DO NOT HAVE CONTACT WITH THE PLO.

Q. WHAT WAS THE LAST TIME THAT AMBASSADOR MURPHY SAW
PRESIDENT ASSAD, AND HOW MANY TIMES HAS HE SEEN HIM IN THE
LAST 3 OR 4 DAYS?

A. AS WE HAVE SAID SEVERAL TIMES, WE ARE IN CLOSE AND CON-
TINUING CONTACT WITH THE LEADERS OF GOVERNMENTS CONCERNED
WITH MIDDLE EAST PEACE EFFORTS. HOWEVER, IT SERVES NO
USEFUL PURPOSE FOR US TO KEEP A BOX SCORE ON HOW MANY
TIMES OR WHEN WE HAVE MET WITH INDIVIDUAL LEADERS.

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